

To the Members of the Committee,

Thank you for holding this committee. As a resident of the Portland area, I have been paying close attention to the protests downtown and the Portland Police Bureau's responses to them. I have been stunned and aghast to see the police regularly exercising violence in response to peaceful protesting; responding to chants and sign-waving with firing tear gas and rubber bullets, beating unarmed citizens for exercising their First Amendment rights, assaulting and arresting journalists, and engaging in behaviors that we would vehemently condemn if we saw them taking place in other countries. We denounced police brutality and alliances with criminal organizations when we witnessed it in Hong Kong, so why on earth would we accept Portland police carrying out the same violence against American citizens, while working hand-in-hand with far-right gangs like Patriot Prayer and the Proud Boys? They have consistently demonstrated that property matters far more to them than human lives.

It is clear that police reform is needed, to say the least. In fact, that these abuses continue despite nationwide protests and the federal government's deployment of troops to violently suppress, surveil and kidnap citizens, there can be no reasonable conclusion other than to say reform is woefully insufficient. The police must be defunded. We must investigate new forms of community safety and re-think the role of police in our society. It is clear that the police are a threat to the citizenry. While I do believe that there are "good cops," the institution as it exists has conclusively proven that it is inherently tyrannical and anti-American - how else can we view an institution that enables under-trained, militarized officers to declare protests against their own brutality to be unlawful at their own whim?

We must follow the lead of cities like Minneapolis, Minnesota, and Camden, New Jersey in defunding and abolishing the police department and replacing it with something that is more accountable to the community in which they operate and does not view the citizenry as their enemy. We must have police who are residents of the cities they patrol, rather than living elsewhere and not having any personal connections to the communities they work in. We must relieve police of duties for which they are underqualified or inappropriate, such as mental health emergencies, and reassign those duties to qualified, unarmed specialists. Police must no longer be protected by laws and union lobbies that ensure they are untouchable no matter how much violence they perpetrate against citizens. There are plentiful alternatives to the current model of policing, and the time is long overdue to investigate and implement them.

We are at a crucial crossroads not only for our communities but also for the United States as a democratic nation. We have the opportunity now to inspire other cities and

lead the way toward replacing the institution of policing with something that is more community-oriented and more beneficial for all. We must make the 21st century a time when the abuse and murder of Black people by police officers are a tragic and unjust memory, not an ongoing atrocity.

Black lives matter. No lives will matter until Black lives matter.

Thank you for your time,

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Devin Parker
[\(He/Him\)](#)